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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 001624

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/03/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#) [PM](#)  
SUBJECT: PANAMA: KEEPING PRESSURE ON THE BURMESE REGIME --  
DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: STATE 137644

Classified By: POLCOUNS Brian R. Naranjo. Reason: 1.4 (d).

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Firm Response on Burma Needed  
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¶1. (C) "Panama supports full-heartedly a very firm response to the recent developments in Burma," MFA DG for International Political Affairs Javier Bonagas told POLCOUNS on October 2. President Torrijos underscored Panama's dissatisfaction in his September 25 UNGA address by stating, "We condemn the violation of human rights in Myanmar and the continued detention of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi," Bonagas reminded POLCOUNS. "Panama will be with the U.S. on this one." During the July visit to Panama by a Burmese VFM, Bonagas said that Panama underscored the need for Burma: to quickly move toward political dialogue, to stop playing games with the international community, and to move forward with democracy. The Burmese left Panama very dissatisfied with the results of their diplomatic outreach effort, Bonagas asserted. Noting that the current situation in Burma resonated in Panama given Panama's own experience with military dictatorship, Bonagas said that Panama would support stronger measures -- including sanctions -- against Burma. Bonagas added that there was no question in Panama's mind that the situation in Burma constituted a threat to international peace and security. Doubting that there would be any further direct contact with the Burmese regime, Bonagas concurred fully that the international community need to emphasis a unified and firm message.

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Comment  
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¶2. (C) In the wake of the September 1 election as President of the National Assembly of governing Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) Deputy Pedro Miguel Gonzalez who is under federal indictment on five counts in connection with the 1992 murder of U.S. serviceman Zak Hernandez and with the U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) under a cloud on the Hill in the wake of Gonzalez's election, Panama is eager to highlight that it remains a close friend and strategic partner of the U.S. Furthermore, the PRD -- the party founded by military strongman Omar Torrijos (the current president's father ) and the party of dictator Manuel Noriega -- is eager not to seem to be giving the Burmese regime a pass for suppressing human rights and thwarting democracy. Predisposed to the U.S. position and having bilateral and domestic reasons to support the U.S. position, Panama should be a partner in efforts to bring pressure to bear on Burma in the UNSC.  
EATON